اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah An-Nas (Mankind) -114

سُوْرَةُ النَّاسِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate**)**

قُلْ اَعُوْذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ١

(114-1) Say: “I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind;

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ٢

(114-2) the King of mankind,

اِلٰهِ النَّاسِ ٣

(114-3) the True God of mankind, (1)

(1) Here also, as in Surah Al-Falaq, instead of saying Audhu-billahi (I seek Allah’s refuge), a prayer has been taught to seek Allah’s refuge by reference to His three attributes: First, that He is Rabb-in-naas, i.e. Sustainer, Provider; second, that He is Malik-in-naas, i.e. Master of all mankind; third, that He is ilah-in-naas, i.e. real Deity of all mankind. Here, one should clearly understand that the word ilah has been used in two meanings in the Quran: first for the thing or person who is practically being worshipped although it or he is not entitled to worship; second, for Him Who is entitled to worship, Who is in fact the Deity whether the people worship Him or not, wherever this word is used for Allah; it has been used in the second meaning. Seeking refuge by means of these three attributes means: I seek refuge with that God, Who being the Sustainer, King and Deity of men, has full power over them, can fully protect them and can really save them from the evil, to save myself and others from which I am seeking His refuge. Not only this; since He alone is Sustainer, King and Deity,

therefore, there is no one beside Him with Whom I may seek refuge and he may give real refuge.

مِ ن شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ۴

(114-4) from the mischief of the whispering, elusive prompter who returns again and again, (2)

(2) The word waswas in waswas-il-khannas means the one who whispers over and over again, and waswasa means to whisper into someone's heart an evil suggestion over and over again in such a way or ways that the one who is being inspired may not feel that the whisperer is whispering an evil suggestion into his heart. Waswasah by itself suggests repetition just as zalzalah contains the meaning of repetitive movement. Since man is not tempted by just one attempt but effort has to be made over and over again to seduce and tempt him, such an attempt is called waswasah and the tempter waswas. As for the word khannas, it is derived from khunus, which means to hide after appearing and to retreat after coming into view. Since khannas is the intensive form, it would imply the one who behaves thus very frequently. Now, obviously the whisperer has to approach man for whispering again and again, and besides, when he is also described as khannas, the combination of the two words by itself gives the meaning that after whispering once he retreats and then again returns over and over again to repeat the act of whispering. In other words, when once he fails in his attempt to whisper evil, he withdraws, then he again returns to make the second and the third and the next attempt over and over again.

After understanding the meaning of waswas-il-khannas, let us consider what is meant by seeking refuge from its evil. Its one meaning is that the seeker after refuge himself seeks God's refuge from its evil, i.e. from the evil lest it should whisper some evil suggestion into his own heart. The second meaning is that the caller to Truth seeks God's refuge from the evil of the one who whispers evil suggestions into the hearts of the people against

himself. It is not in his own power to approach all the people in whose hearts evil suggestions are being whispered against himself individually and remove the misunderstandings of every person. It is also not right and proper for him that he should give up his mission of inviting others to Allah and should devote all his time and energy to removing the misunderstanding created by the whisperer and to answering their accusations. It is also below his dignity that he should stoop to the level of his opponents. Therefore, Allah has instructed the caller to truth to seek only His refuge from the evil of the wicked people, and then to attend single-mindedly to his work of invitation and mission. For it is not for him to deal with them but for Allah, who is Sustainer of men, King of men, God of men.

Here, one should also understand that an evil suggestion is the starting point of evil act. When it affects a careless or heedless person, it creates in him a desire for evil. Then, further whisperings change the evil desire into an evil intention and evil purpose. When the evil suggestion grows in intensity, the intention becomes a resolution, which then culminates in the evil act. Therefore, the meaning of seeking God’s refuge from the evil of the whisperer is that Allah should nip the evil in the bud.

If seen from another aspect, the order of the evil of the whisperers seems to be this: first they incite one to open unbelief, polytheism, or rebellion against Allah and His Messenger, and enmity of the righteous (godly) people. If they fail in this and a person does enter Allah’s religion, they misguide him to some innovation. If they fail in this too, they tempt him to sin. If they do not succeed even in this, they inspire the man with the suggestion that there is no haram in indulging in minor sins, so that if he starts committing these freely, he is over burdened with sin. If one escapes from this too, in the last resort they try that one should keep the true religion confined to oneself, and should do nothing to make it prevail, but if a person defeats all these plans, the whole party of the devils from among men and jinn makes a common front against him and incites and stirs up the people and makes them shower him with invective and accusation and slander, and defames him as widely as it can.

Then, Satan comes to the believer and excites him to anger, saying: It is cowardly of you to have borne all this insult: arise and clash with your opponents. This is the last and final device with Satan by which he tries to thwart the struggle of the caller to truth and entangle him in difficulties and obstructions. If he succeeds in escaping from this too, Satan becomes powerless before him. About this same thing it has been said in the Quran: If Satan ever excites you to anger, seek refuge with Allah. (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 200); (Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah, Ayat 36).

Say: Lord, I seek refuge with You from the promptings of satans. (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 97).

The fact is that if ever an evil suggestion from Satan so much as touches those who are God-fearing people, they immediately get alerted and clearly see the right course they should adopt. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 201).

And on this very basis about the people who escape from this last attack of Satan Allah says: None can attain to this rank except those who are men of great good fortune. (Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah, Ayat 35).

In this connection, another thing should also be kept in mind, and it is this: Evil suggestion is not whispered into the heart of man only from outside by the satans from among men and jinn, but also by the self of man from within. His own wrong theories misguide his intellect, his own unlawful motives and desires lead his power of discrimination, will and power of judgment astray, and it is not only the satans from outside but within man his satan of the self also beguiles him. This same thing has been expressed in the Quran, thus: And We know the evil suggestions arising from his self. (Surah Qaaf, Ayat 16). On this very basis, the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his well-known Sermon said: We seek Allah’s refuge from the evils of our self.

الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ٥

(114-5) who whispers in the hearts of people;

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاسِ۝٦

(114-6) whether he be from the jinn or humans.” (3)

(3) According to some scholars, these words mean that the whisperer whispers evil into the hearts of two kinds of people: the jinn and the men. If this meaning is admitted, the word naas would apply to both jinn and men. They say that this can be so, for when the word rijal (men) in the Quran has been used for the jinn, as in(Surah Al-Jinn, Ayat 6), and when nafar can be used for the group of jinn, as in (Surah A1-Ahqaf, Ayat 29), men and jinn both can be included metaphorically in the word naas also. But this view is wrong because the words naas, ins and insan are even lexically contrary in meaning to the word jinn. The actual meaning of jinn is hidden creation and jinn is called jinn because he is hidden from man’s eye. On the contrary, the words naas and ins are spoken for insan (man) only on the basis that he is manifest and visible and perceptible. In (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 29), the word anasa has been used in the meaning of raa, i.e. the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) saw a fire in the direction of Toor. In (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 6), the word anastum has been used in the meaning of ahsastum or raaytum (i.e. if you perceive or see that the orphans have become capable). Therefore, naas cannot apply to jinn lexically, and the correct meaning of the verse is: From the evil of the whisperer who whispers evil into the hearts of men, whether he be from among the jinn or from the men themselves. In other words, whispering of evil is done by devils from among jinn as well as by devils from among men and the prayer in this Surah has been taught to seek refuge from the evil of both. This meaning is supported by the Quran as well as by the Hadith. The Quran says: And so it has always been that We set against every Prophet enemies from among devils of men and devils of jinn, who have been inspiring one another with charming things to delude the minds. (Surah Al-Anam, Ayat 112).

And in the Hadith, Imam Ahmad, Nasai, and Ibn Hibban have related on the authority of Abu Dharr a tradition, saying: I sat before the Prophet (peace be upon him, who was in the Mosque. He said: Abu Dharr, have you performed the Prayer? I replied in the negative. He said: Arise and perform the Prayer. So, I performed the Prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: O Abu Dharr, seek Allah's refuge from the devils of men and the devils of jinn. I asked, are there devils among men also? O Messenger of Allah! He replied: Yes.